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September 19, 2008

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**BALTIMORE MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN DECADES -LONG SCHEME TO STEAL
IDENTITY INFORMATION AND CASH IN STOLEN CHECKS**

*Conspirators Stole an MVA Photo-Taking Machine, and Cut Telephone Lines at Homes From
Which Thousands of Pieces of Residential Mail Were Stolen*

Baltimore, Maryland - Maurice Racks, age 53, of Baltimore, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to commit mail fraud, aggravated identity theft and social security fraud in connection with an identity theft scheme used to cash at least over \$400,000 in stolen checks in just the past year of the decades-long scheme, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to his plea agreement, from the early 1980s until 2008, Racks and his associates targeted neighborhoods with outdoor mail boxes to obtain thousands of pieces of stolen mail, including identity information, checks and credit cards. They would approach an outdoor mail box with advertising circulars that they would place into the receptacle while simultaneously taking out mail.

Once the mail was stolen, Racks and others would take photos of themselves and others. In the early years of the scheme, they used a photograph-taking machine that was stolen from a Motor Vehicles Administration office by an associate. They created thousands of fraudulent identifications including social security cards, identifications from federal and state agencies and driver's licenses. They called check issuing companies posing as legitimate check cashing establishments and requested social security numbers for the rightful payees of the checks that they had stolen. They also cut telephone lines of residences from which they had stolen mail to prevent a fraud loss or check verification call.

After an identification card was made, Racks and his associates would test the individual for whom the fraudulent identification was made to make certain that he/she was familiar with the rightful payee's information in order to avoid detection. To ensure the impersonation was successful, the co-conspirators would use costumes, including medical scrubs, wheelchairs, canes, suits, hats and sunglasses. If the check was a higher dollar amount, the presenter might wear a suit. After use, the costumes were discarded to avoid detection. The co-conspirators preferred to cash the stolen checks at check cashing establishments that did not take a photograph of the check presenter. In the early years of this scheme, these establishments were plentiful and Racks and his associates cashed thousands of checks with ease. As technology improved, Racks and others began to target more grocery stores and liquor stores.

On September 11, 2007, an associate was arrested for attempting to cash a stolen check presented at a liquor store. On October 4, 2007, Racks fraudulently used a social security number assigned to another person to cash a stolen check. On October 11, 2007, agents searched a motel room where Racks was staying and found a template for a Maryland state identification document, cutouts of state and federal agency emblems and images, fraudulently produced identification documents and a Washington Post article from 2000 concerning the web and identification fakery. Racks was arrested on May 2, 2008.

Over the course of the scheme, Racks and his coconspirators cashed dozens of checks of \$5,000 or more, and hundreds of checks of \$1,500 or more. Racks is responsible for at least \$400,000 in loss based on his participation in the scheme in just the past year.

Racks faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for the conspiracy, a mandatory minimum of two years consecutive to any other term of imprisonment for aggravated identity theft, and five years for social security fraud. U.S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz has scheduled sentencing for December 19, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Social Security Administration - Office of Inspector General and the Baltimore County Police Economic Crimes Unit for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant United States Attorney Solette A. Magnelli, who is prosecuting the case.